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ABSTRACT

This handbook for parents begins with an overview of academic standards: how Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania's standards compare to standards set at the state, national, and international levels; how parents can use standards to help their children; and how parents will know if their children's work meets these standards. The handbook goes on to present a third grader's response-to-reading assignment, then offers a rubric that teachers could use to rate students' work. The handbook discusses reading and writing at all grades, offering a sidebar which examines guidelines for student writing (journal, personal story, fictional story, response-to-reading, informational, creative, report, and persuasive writing). The final section presents grade level academic expectations, focusing on what students should be learning in various areas of communication (reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills). (SM)

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ED 450 201

A PARENT'S HANDBOOK

OUR CHILDREN, K-5

COMMUNICATIONS STANDARDS

IN PITTSBURGH'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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What are standards? INTRODUCTION

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WHAT ARE STANDARDS?

Standards are expectations that describe what students should know and be able to do in different subjects. In 1995, the Pittsburgh School District adopted general standards that apply to kindergarten through twelfth grade. Since then, District staff members have been translating those general statements into grade level expectations.

HOW DO PITTSBURGH'S STANDARDS COMPARE TO STANDARDS SET AT THE STATE, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS?

Pittsburgh's standards for Communications are similar to the Pennsylvania state standards. They are also aligned with the national New Standards Project's™ standards, which were based, in part, on standards set by other countries.

HOW CAN PARENTS USE STANDARDS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN?

Standards tell parents what the School District expects students to learn. For example, standards can give parents more information about a teacher's goals for the class that year, or why a certain activity was assigned for homework. Because the learning process can't always be captured in written statements, teachers may not always be able to define what they do in terms of standards. Still, working in a standards framework helps teachers communicate their goals more clearly to students. Standards also give parents an effective means of communicating with teachers about their children's learning.

HOW WILL PARENTS KNOW IF THEIR CHILDREN'S WORK MEETS STANDARDS?

Elementary school teachers use some measurements that focus on specific skills. For reading and writing, teachers keep "literacy inventories," "running records," and writing folders, and conduct Title I assessments. The results of these assessments can give parents more information about whether or not their children are meeting standards.

Using a "rubric," or scoring guide, is another way that teachers sometimes judge students' work. A rubric, which usually is ranked from 4-1 or 5-1 instead of A-F, outlines in step-by-step detail the skills that a student must demonstrate in order to meet a standard. Students can use rubrics to plan their work, check their own work and their classmates' work, and revise their work to make it better before they turn it in.

The example on the next page shows the relationship between a standard, a rubric, and student work.

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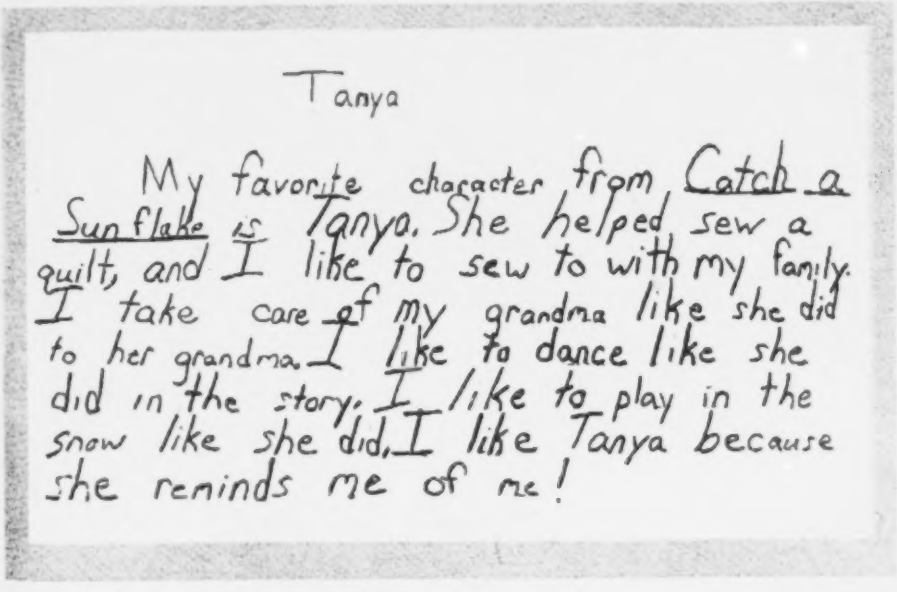
A THIRD GRADER'S "RESPONSE TO READING"

THE ASSIGNMENT: PICK YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER FROM *CATCH A SUNFLAKE*.

TELL WHY YOU PICKED THAT CHARACTER.



Tanya

My favorite character from Catch a Sunflake is Tanya. She helped sew a quilt, and I like to sew to with my family. I take care of my grandma like she did to her grandma. I like to dance like she did in the story. I like to play in the snow like she did. I like Tanya because she reminds me of me!

THIRD GRADE READING STANDARD THAT IS REFLECTED IN THIS STUDENT'S WORK:

Find information in books and relate information to personal experience.

THE TEACHER'S RATING: 3

The student showed basic understanding of the story. She included a moderate amount of information about the story and made some personal connections with it.

A RUBRIC FOR "RESPONSE TO READING"

Below is one of many possible rubrics that a teacher could use to rate students' work.

Rating	Description
4	The response shows that the student thoroughly understood what he or she read. A significant amount of information about the story is included, as well as meaningful information that links the story to the reader's personal experience or to other books. The writing indicates that the reader has reflected on the story, connecting it to events from his or her own life, or making a judgment about the story. The main purpose of the response is clearly to connect the meaning of the story to the reader's reflections about it. There are no factual errors.
3	The response shows that the student understood what he or she read and is able to write about it. A moderate amount of information about the story is included. The reader makes fairly basic connections between the meaning of the story and his/her experiences. There are no major factual errors.
2	The response shows that the student did not fully understand what he or she read. A small amount of information about the story is included. Some of the information included does not relate to the points the writer makes. The student makes very basic connections or describes unrelated events or experiences. There may be factual errors.
1	The response shows that the student understood very little of what he or she read, or misunderstood the story entirely. No information about the story is included, or the information seems to have been chosen at random. Connections to the student's experience are unclear, or missing.

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READING AND WRITING: ALL GRADES

READING: THE "25 BOOKS" STANDARD

Students read books together in class and are also expected to read independently.

INDEPENDENT READING

FIRST GRADE:

10 books or more

SECOND GRADE:

25 books or more, including at least three different types of books (fiction and nonfiction) and at least five different authors

THIRD THROUGH FIFTH GRADES:

25 books or more, including at least four different types of books, at least five different authors, and at least four books or equivalents (such as magazines) about one subject, of one type, or by one author

EXPECTATIONS FOR WRITING

Children are asked to write in the following forms:

JOURNAL: Informal writing to reflect on experiences, events, and/or academic progress, in a style that meets the needs of the writer. "Field trip to zoo—saw black bears, polar bears and sun bear. Use sun bear for report."

PERSONAL STORY: A "narrative" (writing that follows a sequence of events) that describes personal experiences for another reader. "I'll never forget the day at camp when I saw a bear!"

FICTIONAL STORY: A narrative that tells a made-up story, with a setting and a plot. "Once upon a time three bears lived in a little house in the forest."

RESPONSE TO READING: Writing that expresses a reader's views on what he or she has read—making connections with the reader's life, other books or ideas. "*Goldilocks and the Three Bears* is about a girl who makes some stupid decisions."

INFORMATIONAL WRITING: Writing that meets a reader's need for information, such as a guide, a list of directions, or an informative description. "The first step in cooking bear meat is to remove all the fat."

CREATIVE WRITING: Writing based on original ideas from the writer's imagination, such as a poem, a play, or a fictional story.

REPORT: A coherent summary of research on a topic, including information from personal experience, interviews, books, and/or computers. "The sun bear is found in China and at the Pittsburgh Zoo."

PERSUASIVE WRITING: Writing in any format (essay, letter) that makes one main point and supports it with evidence, with the goal of changing the reader's mind. "Some people think that it is cruel to keep large animals in zoos, but there are many good things that zoos do for animals such as bears."

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KINDERG

What your child should be learning: Communications

3

KINDERGARTEN GRADUATES SHOULD...

READING

Identify and say the letters of the alphabet.

Recognize and sort capital and small letters.

Identify and spell own name.

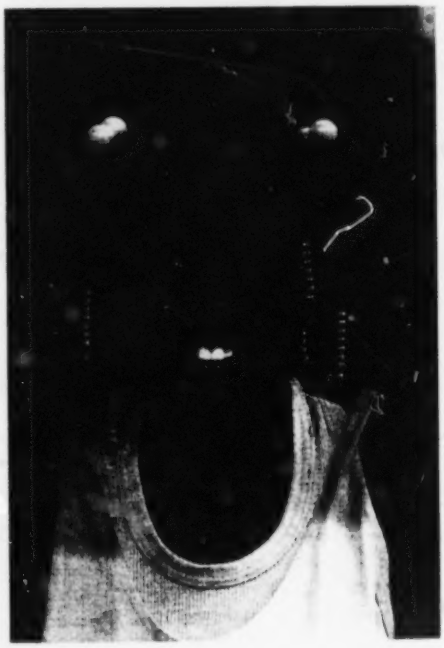
Know the sound/s that each letter makes by itself.

Know that words written in English are read from left to right and top to bottom.

Follow writing with a finger, moving from left to right, pointing to separate words.

Identify favorite books and talk about why they are favorites.

Name and talk about the characters, settings and events in stories.



Use pictures in books to guess what words and stories mean.

Make connections between books, songs, events and personal experiences.

Know the difference between a letter, a word and a sentence.

Know common "sight words" (I, go, **this**, **look**, **big**, **my**, **me**, **am**).

Notice and invent rhyming words.

Identify and sort words based on their sounds (for example: **cat**, **mat**, **bat**, **rat**; **shut**, **share**, **wish**, **flashlight**).

WRITING

Understand that people write down their thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Discuss ideas and draw pictures as a way to plan writing.

Write own name with correct capital and small letters.

Begin writing from left to right, top to bottom, using some letters that match sounds.

Read writing aloud to others, using a finger to follow the words.

Write (and draw pictures) for different reasons:

- To tell a story
- To describe thoughts and feelings

Use a computer to write.

SPEAKING/LISTENING

Listen and respond to a range of stories and performances, including puppet shows, plays, musical shows, fantasy stories, non-fiction books and poetry.

Retell stories and events in order, with some details.

Use a loud, clear voice when speaking.

Know how to take turns with others while speaking, playing, and listening.

Respond to and give simple directions.

Ask and answer different questions on a topic.

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What your child should be learning: GRADE ONE
Communications

FIRST GRADE GRADUATES SHOULD...

READING

Know consonant letter sounds (b/f/y/w), short and long vowel sounds (a/e/i/o/u) and sounds made from combinations of letters (sh/ch/-ck).

Use many strategies to read unknown words:
- Sound them out.
- Recognize "chunks" of sound: bat, cat...green, seen...call, hall.
- Look at parts of words to figure out the whole.
- Ask "what word would make sense?"
- Look for clues, such as pictures or word patterns.

Begin to read aloud with fluency, following each word read with a finger, but striving to make words flow.

Know common "sight words" (**the, said, little, what, where, and, from, this**).

Think about, make connections and ask reflective questions while reading. ("What is going on?" "Who are the characters?" "How would I feel if I was in the story?" "What might happen next?")

Know the main parts of a book (title, author, illustrator, cover, table of contents, index).

Read different kinds of books, including fiction and non-fiction.

Express and defend opinions about:
- Books and authors
- Ideas found within books
- Ideas inspired by books

Look at and talk about books in order to:
- Compare and contrast themes, word choice, illustrations and plot.
- Identify characters and main ideas.
- Notice different points of view.

WRITING

Write thoughts and feelings in sentences.

Consistently use spaces between words when writing.

Use capital and small letters correctly in sentences.

Capitalize letters at the beginning of sentences and use punctuation at the end of sentences.

When trying to spell words, sound out their beginning, middle, and ending sounds.

Focus on a writing topic and begin to use interesting words to describe ideas.

When writing:
- Brainstorm (think of ideas).
- Work with teachers to organize thoughts.
- Write a draft, focusing on getting ideas on paper.
- Share writing with classmates, ask for feedback, and rewrite to clarify ideas.
- Edit work with other people to improve spelling and punctuation.
- Publish (write a final copy), share and present work.

Write in different forms and identify different forms of writing:
- Personal stories
- Fictional stories
- Responses to reading
- Informational writing
- Journals

Use a computer to publish writing.

SPEAKING/LISTENING

Follow and give two-to-four-step directions and identify reasons for the directions.

Listen and ask questions about topics that are discussed in class, linking questions and comments to the topic.

Use a loud, strong and clear voice when speaking.

Speak in complete sentences when appropriate.

Tell and retell stories and events in a sequence, using details and interesting language.

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GRADE TWO

SECOND GRADE GRADUATES SHOULD...

READING

Know many basic "sight words" (**because, group, enough, nothing, already, together, through**).

Identify and read smaller chunks of words within large words, noticing patterns and structures.

Use and name many other strategies to read unknown words:

- Ask "what word would make sense?"
- Look for clues, such as pictures or word patterns.
- Make predictions about meaning.
- Re-read for better understanding.

Read aloud with fluency and expression, striving for flow between words and sentences, changing rhythm, pace and intonation to express meaning.

Think about, make connections and ask reflective questions while reading. ("What is going on?" "What do I know that is the same or different than this?" "How would I feel if I was in the story?" "What might happen next?" "What would happen if...?")

Identify and discuss themes, problems/solutions, main ideas, and the use of images and humor in books.

Read different types of books, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, fantasy, and folk tales.

Find information in books and:
- Summarize ideas.
- Form opinions about ideas and information.
- Relate information to personal experience.

WRITING

Write in complete sentences, using capital letters and periods correctly.

Begin to use commas correctly.

Spell common words and words that follow simple spelling patterns correctly.

When writing:

- Brainstorm (think of ideas).
- Organize thoughts (make a list or take notes).
- Write a draft, focusing on getting ideas on paper.
- Share writing with classmates, ask for feedback, and rewrite to clarify ideas.
- Edit—work with other people to improve grammar and sentence and paragraph structure.
- Publish (write a final copy), share and present work.

Write in different forms and identify different forms of writing:

- Personal stories
- Fictional stories
- Responses to reading
- Informational writing
- Journals
- Poetry

Select topics of interest and stick to a topic when writing.

Use details, images, a unique style, links to personal experience, and supporting ideas in order to make **writing interesting.**

Use a dictionary, a thesaurus and/or a computer to proofread, correct misspellings, find information and publish work.

SPEAKING/LISTENING

Explain clearly how to solve a problem, step by step.

Participate in group discussions:
- Take turns.
- Link comments and questions to the topic.
- Recognize that group discussion is a shared experience for both listeners and speakers.

Speak loudly and clearly, making eye contact and using supportive gestures.

Begin to summarize and paraphrase directions, information and events ("The directions said to lift the lever, move the switch to the right and then open the door. After that, we can roll the ball down the ramp.")

Begin to use complex sentences while speaking.

Know ways to resolve conflicts and be able to help **others resolve conflicts through discussion.**

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What your child should be learning: GRADE THREE

Communications

THIRD GRADE GRADUATES SHOULD...

READING

Use and name many strategies to pronounce words and read for meaning:
- Ask "what word would make sense?"
- Look for clues, such as context, pictures or word patterns.
- Make predictions about meaning.
- Re-read to check for meaning while looking for familiar patterns or contexts.
- Ask questions while reading to find themes, patterns and deeper meanings.

Read aloud with expression, flow, rhythm, pace and intonation that is similar to everyday speech.

Notice new vocabulary words and ask questions about them. Relate new words to personal experience.

Identify and discuss themes, levels of meaning, the concepts of metaphor and irony, and important information in books.

Identify and discuss characters' motives, the believability of plots/themes and the differences between types of books.

Know how to make and defend judgments about books, authors, characters, themes, and ideas within books, relating judgments to personal experience.

Read different types of books, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, fantasy, folk tales, and biography, focusing on one type or one author.

Find information in books and:
- Summarize ideas.
- Form opinions about ideas and information.
- Relate information to personal experience.
- Identify important and unimportant information.

WRITING

Write in complete sentences, using capital letters and punctuation correctly and appropriate paragraphs and sentence structure.

Begin to use commas, apostrophes and quotation marks correctly throughout writing.

Spell words correctly on final copies. Use resources (other people, classroom "word walls," books, charts, computer spell-check) to find correct spellings.

When writing:
- Brainstorm (think of ideas).
- Organize thoughts (make a list or take notes) and select topics of interest.
- Write a draft, focusing on getting ideas on paper.
- Write paragraphs with a topic sentence, sentences that support the topic, and a concluding sentence.
- Establish a point of view and a style of writing. Use details, images, metaphors, a unique style, links to personal experience, and supporting reasons to make writing interesting.
- Share writing with classmates, ask for feedback, and rewrite to clarify ideas.
- Edit—work with other people to improve grammar and sentence and paragraph structure.
- Publish (write a final copy), share and present work.

Write in different forms and identify different forms of writing:
- Personal stories
- Fictional stories
- Responses to reading
- Informational writing
- Journals
- Reports
- Poetry
- Autobiographies
- Persuasive essays

Use a dictionary, a thesaurus and/or a computer to proofread, correct misspellings, find information, add depth to writing, and publish work.

SPEAKING/LISTENING

Summarize and paraphrase directions, information and events.

Use complex sentence structures and interesting words while speaking.

Speak loudly and clearly, making eye contact and using supportive gestures persuasively.

Participate in group discussions:
- Take turns.
- Link comments and questions to the topic.
- Recognize that group discussion is a shared experience for both listeners and speakers.

Know ways to resolve conflicts and be able to help others resolve conflicts through discussion.

Notice and adapt to audience responses while speaking.

Give formal presentations on different subjects.

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FOURTH GRADE GRADUATES SHOULD...

READING

Use and name many strategies to pronounce words and read for meaning:
- Find context clues.
- Make predictions about meaning.
- Re-read to check for meaning while looking for familiar patterns or contexts.
- Go back over what was read to ask clarifying questions, looking for deeper meanings and themes.

Read aloud with expression, flow, rhythm, pace and intonation that is similar to everyday speech.

Notice and ask questions about new vocabulary words. Relate new words to personal experience. Use a glossary and a thesaurus to expand vocabulary.

Read different types of books, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, fantasy, folk tales, and biography, focusing on one type or one author.

Think deeply about books:
- Identify themes.
- Notice different levels of meaning.
- Find examples and discuss the concepts of metaphor and irony.
- Discuss points of view and compare the styles of different authors.
- Notice authors' biases, assumptions and motives.
- Discuss how authors try to persuade an audience.

Make and defend judgments about authors, characters, themes, and ideas within books, relating judgments to personal experience and supporting these judgments with evidence.

Find information in books and:
- Summarize and paraphrase ideas.
- Form opinions, draw conclusions and defend judgments.
- Identify important and unimportant information.
- Make inferences (logical guesses) about information.
- Identify stereotypes.
- Distinguish between valid arguments (those that can be supported with evidence) and invalid arguments (those that can't be supported with evidence).

Find materials and research a topic, using primary research (interviews, letters requesting information, surveys, original written sources) and secondary

research (books, magazines or films that present information from another researcher's point of view).

Know that writing comes in different formats (advertising copy, web pages, brochures). Notice and make judgments about the role of media in society, including advertising, television, films, magazines, the Internet, and public art.

WRITING

Write using correct English:
- Sentence and paragraph structure
- Capitalization and punctuation
- Spelling

Use a variety of words and sentences.

When writing:
- Brainstorm (think of ideas) and organize thoughts (use notes and lists to make an outline).
- Develop a specific purpose or audience.
- Write a draft, focusing on getting ideas on paper.
- Support ideas in different ways—personal experience, research data, connections to book passages, and quotations from other people.
- Use transitions that link thoughts in meaningful ways.
- Use appropriate concluding statements.
- Share writing with classmates, ask for feedback, and rewrite to clarify ideas.
- Edit work with other people to improve word choice and sentence structure, add details, and focus the overall message.
- Publish (write a final copy), share and present work in a variety of ways.

Write and identify different types of writing:
- Autobiographies
- Fictional stories
- Responses to reading
- Informational writing
- Journals
- Reports
- Poetry
- Persuasive essays

Experiment with point of view, style, and type of writing (genre), being creative to make writing more vivid and interesting. Consider details, images, metaphors, uniqueness, links to personal experience, and supporting reasons.

Use a dictionary, a thesaurus and/or a computer to proofread, correct misspellings, find information, add depth to writing and publish work.

SPEAKING/LISTENING

Participate in a formal meeting (a private meeting or a public event) and/or an interview.

Give formal presentations and reports on different subjects, using notes.

Be able to initiate new topics for discussion and add new ideas to topics being discussed.

Summarize and paraphrase information and ideas as a way to engage a conversational partner ("When you said...," "I understand this to mean...).

Speak clearly, using eye contact, loudness, pacing, posture, and supportive gestures persuasively.

Participate in group discussions:
- Take turns.
- Link comments and questions to the topic.
- Recognize that group discussion is a shared experience for both listeners and speakers.

Participate in group decisions and think of ideas for solving problems cooperatively.

Notice and adapt to audience responses while speaking.

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What your child should be learning: GRADE FIVE Communications

FIFTH GRADE GRADUATES SHOULD...

READING

Use and name many strategies to pronounce words and read for meaning:
- Find context clues.
- Make predictions about meaning.
- Re-read to check for meaning while looking for familiar patterns or contexts.
- Go back over what was read to ask clarifying questions, looking for deeper meanings and themes.

Read aloud with expression, flow, rhythm, pace and intonation that are similar to everyday speech.

Notice and ask questions about new vocabulary words. Relate new words to personal experience. Use a glossary and a thesaurus to expand vocabulary.

Read different types of books, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, fantasy, folk tales, and biography, focusing on two to three types (genres) or two to three authors.

Think deeply about books, including books from different cultures:
- Identify themes.
- Notice different levels of meaning.
- Find examples and discuss the concepts of metaphor and irony.
- Discuss points of view and compare the styles of different authors.
- Notice authors' biases, assumptions and motives.
- Discuss how authors try to persuade an audience.
- Critique ideas and writing styles in books in order to think of different ways of writing.

Make and defend judgments persuasively about authors, characters, themes, and ideas within books, relating judgments to personal experience and supporting these judgments with evidence:
- Interpret: paraphrase ideas using personal judgments.
- Analyze: separate into parts as a way to understand the whole.
- Evaluate: make a judgment.
- Reflect: think back on the experience of reading and make connections to other experiences.

Find information in books and:
- Summarize and paraphrase ideas.
- Form opinions, draw conclusions and defend judgments.
- Identify important and unimportant information.
- Make inferences (logical guesses) about information.
- Identify stereotypes.
- Distinguish between valid arguments (those that can be supported with evidence) and invalid arguments (those that can't be supported with evidence).

Find materials and research a topic, using primary research (interviews, letters requesting information, surveys, original written sources) and secondary research (books, magazines or films that present information from another researcher's point of view).

Know that writing comes in different formats (advertising copy, web pages, brochures) that influence society in different ways. Notice and make judgments about the role of media in society, including advertising, television, films, magazines, the Internet, and public art.

WRITING

Write using correct English:
- Sentence and paragraph structure
- Capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
- Citations (Jones, Dr. Michael. Pittsburgh in the 1920s. New York: Books, Yeah! Press, 1998.)

Use a variety of words and sentences.

When writing:
- Brainstorm (think of ideas) and organize thoughts (use notes and lists to make an outline).
- Develop a specific purpose or audience.
- Write a draft, focusing on getting ideas on paper.
- Support ideas in different ways—personal experience, research data, connections to book passages, and quotations from other people.
- Use transitions that link thoughts in meaningful ways.
- Use appropriate concluding statements.
- Share writing with classmates, ask for feedback, and rewrite to clarify ideas.
- Edit—work with other people to improve word choice and sentence structure, add details, and focus the overall message.
- Publish (write a final copy), share and present work in a variety of ways.

Write in different forms and identify different forms of writing:
- Autobiographies
- Fictional stories
- Responses to reading
- Informational writing
- Journals
- Reports
- Poetry
- Persuasive essays

Produce one quality piece of fiction, non-fiction, poetry or drama, following its stylistic rules.

Experiment with point of view, style and type of writing (genre), being creative to make writing more vivid and interesting. Consider details, images, metaphors, uniqueness, links to personal experience, and supporting reasons.

Write using different techniques, including dialogue, emotional images, different types of language, and unique details.

Use a dictionary, a thesaurus and/or a computer to proofread, correct misspellings, find information, add depth to writing, and publish work.

SPEAKING/LISTENING

Participate in conferences, group meetings, and interviews.

Give formal presentations and reports on various subjects, following organized notes and reciting some ideas from memory.

Be able to initiate new topics for discussion and add new ideas to topics being discussed.

Summarize and paraphrase information and ideas as a way to engage a conversational partner ("Wher you said...," "I understand this to mean...").

Speak clearly, using eye contact, loudness, pacing, posture, and supportive gestures persuasively.

Participate in group discussions:
- Take turns.
- Link comments and questions to the topic.
- State ideas persuasively.
- Recognize that group discussion is a shared experience for both listeners and speakers.

Participate in group decisions and think of ideas for solving problems cooperatively.

Notice and adapt to audience responses while speaking.

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The Pittsburgh Council on Public Education

OUR MISSION

The Pittsburgh Council on Public Education is an independent, citywide citizen voice working to ensure that every child in Pittsburgh receives the highest quality public education. We provide information on key education issues, and work with parents, students, and community members to assume leadership roles in their schools.

OUR VISION

The Pittsburgh Council on Public Education envisions a united community of parents and citizens who are knowledgeable about public education issues and who together create equitable, accessible, and high quality public schools that produce educated citizens who are confident of their ability to learn and to achieve their highest potential throughout their lives.

OUR CORE BELIEFS

- All children are entitled to free and equal access to quality public education that responds to the diverse needs of individuals and families;
- Every community has assets that can be tapped to support schools and students;
- Parents and community members must be involved in decisions regarding student education and achievement;
- Collaboration must be central in all initiatives that carry forward each public school's mission;
- Grassroots organizing remains a primary vehicle for the engagement of parents and community members in addressing the racial and economic achievement gap;
- Outreach and support efforts must be targeted to Parent School Community Councils (PSCCs) and other parent leaders to energize and empower them in their work;
- Reducing school violence and decreasing bigotry depends on exploring new approaches to building a greater sense of tolerance and community.

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THANKS

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